



**State of Tennessee
Department of State
Tennessee State Library and Archives**

**ARGIE COOPER PUBLIC LIBRARY
(SHELBYVILLE, TENN.)
COLLECTION,
1929-2008**

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator:

Argie Cooper Public Library (Shelbyville, Tenn.)

Inclusive Dates:

1929-2008

Scope & Content:

The Argie Cooper Public Library (Shelbyville, Tenn.) Collection spans the period 1929-2008. The items relate directly to the Bedford County Courthouse fire of 1934, the Bedford County Medical Society, the Shelbyville Junior Chamber of Commerce, the Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association, and the Shelbyville Woman's Club. The collection is composed of 20 volumes that include scrapbooks, minute books, a history of the Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association (believed to be unaffiliated with the national Parent Teacher Association), and a high school report.

The materials concerning the Bedford County Courthouse fire of 1934 (v. 1-4) are made up of a scrapbook containing newspaper clippings, a high school report, the original Cascade High School Oral History Project scrapbook, and a bound copy of the project's overview and findings. The scrapbook of newspaper clippings (v. 1) was compiled by W. Mark Alexander and donated to the Argie Cooper Public Library in 1987. Mr. Alexander was an eyewitness to the fire and has written a prologue to the scrapbook. He has also commented on some of the clippings. An example can be seen on the page containing a clipping from the December 20, 1934, edition of the *Nashville Banner*, where he contradicts the newspaper account: "Note: This is an impossible picture. Rifle [*sic*] shots were fired from within courthouse."

The Cascade High School Oral History Project is titled “Watch Old Justice Burn” and was completed in 1973 by a team of eight students. The project scrapbook (v. 3) includes an outline, an introduction to the project, photographs, student summary and evaluation, and lists of interviews and primary and secondary sources. The project introduction contains materials related to topic selection, a survey of written accounts, advertising, special technical skills, scheduling and conducting interviews, cassette tape preparation, outlining interview contents, writing the report, collecting photographs, and project preservation. It should be noted that the scrapbook contains photographs of E. K. Harris, the project process, interviewees, fire spectators, and the courthouse before, during, and after the fire. Members of the project team were Bonnie Fann, Betty Ann Edde, Mary Jane Troxler, Susan Grubbs, Charles Rippey, Randy Webb, Carl Helton, and George Hodge. Their instructor was Thomas B. Philpot.

Team members selected the 1934 burning of the Bedford County Courthouse as the theme for their assignment based on the proximity of the occurrence, accessibility to persons who remembered the fire, the historical significance of the incident, and the limited scope of the topic. They advertised in local newspapers seeking people with information about the event. The results were impressive, and oral history interviews were conducted with the following individuals: Mrs. Calvert Phelps, Mr. Buford Haynes, Mr. Dick Poplin, Mrs. Rufus Nelson, Mr. Ewing Dickerson, Mr. Comer Claxton, Mr. James Bomar, Mr. Calvin Daughtrey, Mr. John E. Gant, Mr. Erastus Curlee, Mrs. Bowling (formerly Mrs. Tom Prince), Mr. James Edwards, Mr. Ollie Watson, Mr. T. L. Bingham, Mr. Sam McClain, Mrs. Pruitt Stokes, Mr. Irvin Brannon, and Mrs. Claude Haynes. The Tennessee State Library and Archives has digitized the original cassettes; In-house reference copies will be made available upon request and can be purchased for a small fee. The school report (v. 4) is also titled “Watch Old Justice Burn” and was written by Mary Ann Roberts in 1978. Ms. Roberts cites the Cascade research team’s oral history project in her bibliography. She includes photographs of “state troops shooting tear gas into mob,” Army trucks “wrecked and burned by mob,” the courthouse from December 19-20, 1934, and a hand-drawn map of the Shelbyville court square.

The Bedford County Medical Society minute books (v. 5-6) consist of two volumes. The first, dated 1929-1963, contains a record of the transactions and proceedings of the society. The second, dated 1963-1984, contains minutes as well as a few Society resolutions. The resolutions are not bound.

The Shelbyville Junior Chamber of Commerce (Jaycees) materials (v. 7-9) are made up of three award entry scrapbooks. Two of the books (v. 7-8) were entries for the Giessenbier Memorial Trophy (an award named after Henry Giessenbier, the first president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce national organization), and the other (v. 9) was an entry for an agriculture award. The Giessenbier Memorial Trophy scrapbooks are dated 1951-1952 and 1952-1953. The agriculture scrapbook is dated 1947-1948. It should be noted that all scrapbooks contain

materials outside of the date ranges listed on their covers. The scrapbooks hold newspaper clippings, photographs, correspondence, programs, tickets, canceled checks, broadsides, and membership cards. The agriculture scrapbook focuses on the Junior Chamber of Commerce's involvement in the 4-H Club's cattle initiatives. Loose newspaper clippings, dating to 1958, are included in the back of this scrapbook. The two Giessenbier Memorial Trophy award entry scrapbooks are all inclusive and focus on the Jaycees' membership and community development work. Notable items include clippings related to the opening of Bedford County's first municipal swimming pool, a letter (February 12, 1952) regarding the organization of a Jaycees group in Murfreesboro, and a letter from Gov. Gordon Browning (August 29, 1951) regarding his attendance at the Jaycees annual celebration.

The Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association materials (v. 10-14) consist of a minute book and four scrapbooks. The minute book (v. 11) records the transactions and proceedings of the Shelbyville Grammar School Parents-Teachers Association for the 1956-1957 school year. The scrapbooks (v. 10, 12-14) contain elementary school Parents-Teachers materials for the 1951-1952 school year (v. 10), the history of the Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association (v. 12), the PTA horse show (v. 13), and school activities (v. 14). The scrapbooks are made up of newspaper clippings, photographs, programs, and correspondence. The April 1969 issue of *The National Horseman* is included in the back of the horse show scrapbook.

The Shelbyville Woman's Club scrapbooks (v. 15-20) contain newspaper clippings, photographs, yearbooks, correspondence, meeting minutes, programs, invitations, and save-the-date cards. Popular luncheon topics include music, quilting, embroidery, fashion, ballroom dancing, travel (in particular to Europe and the Holy Land), dolls, and storytelling. Notable guest speakers include Rudy Kalis (sportscaster, WSMV-TV, Nashville), Mrs. Henry Cannon (Minnie Pearl), and Dr. John C. Frist Jr. (Nashville plastic surgeon).

Physical Description/Extent:

20 volumes; 9 cassettes

Accession/Record Group Number:

Mf. 2025

Language:

English

Permanent Location:

Mf. 2025 and D-0008 (available only on microfilm and digital audio)

Repository:

Tennessee State Library and Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243-0312

Administrative/Biographical History**Argie Cooper Public Library**

In 1965, the Argie Cooper Public Library moved to its current location at 100 S. Main Street, Shelbyville, Tennessee. The Beaux-Arts style building is the only one of its kind in Shelbyville. It was constructed in 1915 to house Shelbyville's post office. In January 2011, the structure was granted landmark status by the Shelbyville Planning Commission following a request by the Shelbyville-Bedford County Library Board and Shelbyville's Historical Zoning Commission.

The library is named for Gov. Prentice Cooper's mother, Argentine "Argie" (Shofner) Cooper. As Cooper was unmarried when he took office, his mother served as first lady. She was a strong advocate and did many things to encourage reading in the state. Gov. Cooper also promoted reading and, during his time as governor, the state started providing free textbooks to students. Prior to this time, parents were required to purchase schoolbooks for their children.

The minute books and scrapbooks as well as the nine original oral history cassettes in this collection reside at the Argie Cooper Public Library and are available for patron use.

Bedford County Courthouse

The courthouse is the physical repository of county government records. It has also witnessed many significant historical events. Since it was formed in 1807, Bedford County has had six courthouses: four structures on the public square in Shelbyville and two meeting locations prior to the establishment of the town center and square.

The first Bedford County Court met at Widow Ann Payne's log cabin home at the headwaters of Mulberry Creek in the community later called County Line (now in Moore County). It was chosen because of its central location. In 1809, the area became part of Lincoln County, so the Bedford court moved to Amos Balch's farm. This centrally-located site lay along the Lewisburg Pike and the western side of Naron Road making it a convenient meeting place. In 1810, town lots and a public square were established in Shelbyville, and by August a log structure on the square became the first county courthouse to reside in the town.

County Court called for a more substantial structure to be built in the center of the public square. The *Tennessee Gazette* of August 1810 fully described the construction and bid specifications and expected it to be completed by October 1812. This 1812 structure was destroyed in a tornado in 1830. A second courthouse was built by 1833, and this structure survived until 1863. At various times during the Civil War, Shelbyville was under both Confederate and Union occupation. By March 1863, Confederate troops were in downtown Shelbyville, and a fire started late in the evening of March 29, razing this second structure. Recovery in the post-Civil War economy delayed construction, but by 1872 building began on the third Bedford County Courthouse.

This 1872 classical revival-style version of the courthouse was built of solid stone and brick and survived until December 1934. In December 1934, a vigilante mob crowded the courthouse and by late evening of December 19 it set fire to the building. This incident was incited by the trial of E. K. Harris, a young African American man accused of attacking a 14-year-old female student of Fall Creek School. The event created such tension during the three days previous to the trial that Tennessee National Guard troops were mobilized to protect the courthouse, lawyers, and defendant. Tensions subsided and the National Guard withdrew to a camp nearby. When the defendant was transferred to another venue for safekeeping, the mob's anger was rekindled, and they began to attack the courthouse with sticks of dynamite and gasoline. Throughout the evening of the 19th, the courthouse burned to a shell of brick and stone. In 1935-1936, the courthouse was rebuilt by Nashville architectural firm Marr & Holman using the exterior walls. This version of the courthouse still exists as the center of the town and county government.

Source: Information in the historical note was gleaned from various items within this collection and from the following sources:

Bedford County Historical Society. *Bedford County, Tennessee: Family History Book*. Paducah, Ky.: Turner Publishing Company, 2002.

Marsh, Timothy R., Helen C. Marsh, and Garland King. *Early History of Bedford County, Tennessee: Two hundred years along the three forks of Duck River*. Tenn.: T. R. Marsh Publishing, 2007.

Tennessee Gazette [Shelbyville, Tenn.] August 1810: Bedford County Microfilm Roll 79, TSLA.

Bedford County, Tenn., County Court Minutes 1863-1869.

Bedford County Medical Society

Bedford County Medical Society encouraged all physicians in practice in the county to participate in the Medical Society in order to assure quality

treatment for the benefit of patients. Doctors in good standing with the county society were granted membership in the Tennessee Medical Society (renamed Tennessee Medical Association in 1902). County medical societies across the state combined to become the “federation of medical societies that held charters from the Tennessee Medical Association.”(Hamer, p.xxii) This practice began in 1902. By the 1920s, many counties did not have enough doctors to maintain an individual county society. So, some surrounding regional counties combined to form groups. There were 78 of 95 counties that maintained individual medical societies by 1928. Bedford County continues to maintain a membership of county doctors due to the high number of physicians in the county.

The Bedford County Medical Society record books included in this collection begin in 1929 and continue through 1984. They list the majority of the doctors practicing in the county during those years. As of 2012, the Bedford County Medical Society is a dormant member of TMA.

Source: Information in the historical note was gleaned from various items within this collection and from the following source:

Hamer, Philip M. *The Centennial History of the Tennessee State Medical Association, 1830-1930*. Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Medical Association, 1930.

Junior Chamber of Commerce

In 1910, Henry Giessenbier, along with some of his friends, formed the Herculaneum Dance Club in St. Louis, Missouri. The focus of the organization was to preserve conservative dance styles. In 1915, Colonel H. N. Morgan convinced the group to become involved in other civic issues. On October 13, 1915, a group of 33 men (including Henry Giessenbier) formed the Young Men's Progressive Civic Association (YMPCA). In 1916, the name was changed from the YMPCA to the Junior Citizens (JCs, later Jaycees). In 1918, the JCs became officially associated with the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce and became the St. Louis Junior Chamber of Commerce. Henry Giessenbier began contacting other cities about forming similar groups in their areas. The United States Junior Chamber of Commerce was formed in the years following World War I. Henry Giessenbier was the first president of the national organization.

Source: Information in the historical note was gleaned from various items within this collection and from the following source:

Junior Chamber of Commerce. “History of the Junior Chamber.” *Eldorado Jaycees*. <http://www.eldoradojaycees.org/?page_id=44>.

Shelbyville Woman's Club

The Shelbyville Woman's Club is a local membership association in Shelbyville, Tennessee. To establish membership, a woman must complete and submit an application form. Her application must then be approved by the Executive Committee. Once accepted, individuals must pay yearly dues. The Shelbyville Woman's Club recognizes the following officers: President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Their Executive Board is comprised of the officers and the chairmen of all standing committees. The club meets once a month for a luncheon, usually with a guest speaker or some sort of entertainment. The Woman's Club also participates in various civic projects. They celebrated their 60th anniversary in 2003.

Source: Information in the historical note was gleaned from various items within this collection.

Organization/Arrangement of Materials

Collection is arranged alphabetically by organization.

Conditions of Access and Use

Restrictions on Access:

No restrictions.

Restrictions on Use and Reproduction:

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Index Terms

Personal Names:

Alexander, W. Mark
Browning, Gordon, 1889-1976
Frist, John C., fl. 1974
Gant, John E.
Harris, E. K., d. 1936
Kalis, Rudy
Minnie Pearl
Philpot, Thomas B.

Corporate Names/Organizations/Government Bodies:

Bedford County Courthouse (Shelbyville, Tenn.)
Bedford County Medical Society (Shelbyville, Tenn.)
Cascade High School (Wartrace, Tenn.)
Junior Chamber of Commerce (Shelbyville, Tenn.)
Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association (Shelbyville, Tenn.)
Shelbyville Woman's Club (Shelbyville, Tenn.)

Subjects:

Agriculture -- History -- Sources
Courthouses -- Tennessee -- Shelbyville -- 1930-1940
Fires -- Tennessee -- Shelbyville -- History
Awards -- United States -- History

Geographic Names:

Shelbyville (Tenn.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources
Bedford County (Tenn.) -- History -- 20th century -- Sources

Document Types:

Minute books
Scrapbooks
Sound recordings

Acquisition and Appraisal**Provenance and Acquisition:**

This collection was loaned to the Tennessee State Library and Archives by the Argie Cooper Public Library in Shelbyville, Tennessee, on April 19, 2012. It was microfilmed and returned to the donor.

Processing and Administrative Information**Preferred Citation:**

Argie Cooper Public Library (Shelbyville, Tenn.) Collection, 1929-2008,
Tennessee State Library and Archives

Processing Information:

The collection was reviewed and prepared for microfilming by Lori D. Lockhart, June 11, 2012. Carol Roberts wrote the historical notes for the Bedford County Courthouse and the Bedford County Medical Society.

Existence and Location of Originals:

Held privately.

Electronic Location and Access:

<http://www.tennessee.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/mf2025.pdf>

DETAILED COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

CONTAINER LIST

Contents/Item Title	Date	Volume
Bedford County Courthouse -- Fire clipping scrapbook compiled by W. Mark Alexander	1934-1935, 1987	1
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Bedford County Courthouse -- "Watch Old Justice Burn" -- Cascade High School -- Original oral history project scrapbook	1973	3
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Bedford County Medical Society -- Minute book	1963-1984	6
Junior Chamber of Commerce -- Award Entry Scrapbook for Giessenbier Memorial Trophy, 1951-1952	1949-1952	7
Junior Chamber of Commerce -- Award Entry Scrapbook for Giessenbier Memorial Trophy, 1952-1953	1952-1956	8
Junior Chamber of Commerce -- Award Entry Scrapbook on Agriculture, 1947-1948	1947-1958	9
Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association -- Elementary School scrapbook	1951-1952	10
Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association -- Grammar School minute book	1956-1957	11
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Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association -- Horse Show Scrapbook	1932-1951	13
Shelbyville Parents-Teachers Association -- Scrapbook	1953	14
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Shelbyville Woman's Club -- Scrapbook	1981-1995	18
Shelbyville Woman's Club -- Scrapbook	1995-2001	19
Shelbyville Woman's Club -- Scrapbook	2001-2008	20